

How to Hold a Successful Video Conference

A TelSpan Worldwide Conferencing White Paper

Prior to Your Video Conferencing Event

- Notify all conference participants of the scheduled date and time of the event. (Your video conferencing provider may offer a notification service.)
- Distribute any necessary materials to participants in advance.
- Designate a facilitator to control the flow of the conference by following a preset agenda.
- Turn on your video conferencing equipment at least twenty minutes before the scheduled conference time.
- Be present at your desk or conference room at least five minutes prior to the start of the conference.

During Your Video Conferencing Event

- Look straight into the camera (when speaking), and minimize background movement.
- Speak clearly and distinctly.
- If your site is not participating in the conference, it is best to mute the audio feed from your location. (Remember that your video microphone is very sensitive and picks up noises such as rustling papers, whispering, and external conversations.)
- Identify yourself when you speak, or when you conduct a roll call to introduce the other participants.
- Do not interrupt other speakers. The facilitator should ask for feedback from one site rather than from many sites at once.
- Utilize your conference specialist whenever you need assistance.

Preparing your Conferencing Room and Equipment

Acoustics

If you are setting up a conferencing room, make sure you design for “broadcast studio” quality. For example, you might not be aware of the noise coming from the fan of an air-conditioning unit located in your room. This type of background noise may be relaxing and rhythmic, but to the other participants of a video conference, it simply sounds like static from an unknown source.

Lighting

Participants should be lighted from the front as well as from the back. If possible, avoid natural lighting since it is unpredictable and may cast shadows upon the conference participants.

Camera and Microphone

Position the camera so that conference participants at other sites will receive the best view of your location. Especially with desktop equipment, be sure to place the camera as close to the screen as possible so your image to other participants is displayed as if you are looking at them. Also, remember to place the desktop unit's microphone within the direct sound of your voice.

Equipment

Become familiar with your video conferencing equipment. Know the placement of the controls, how to maneuver the camera, and how to use the auxiliary equipment. At least one conference participant at each site should know how to mute the audio feed. Be aware of the phone numbers assigned to the equipment you are using.

Movement

Minimize the background activity in your conferencing room since this may be very distracting for you as well as for the other participants. Also, speak clearly, and try to avoid rapid and constant movements. If you are video conferencing at a speed less than 384 kbps, quick movements are “strobed.” That is, the frame transmission rate cannot keep up with the movement. The wider the bandwidth, the better the frame rate and resolution.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is "Video Conferencing"?

Video conferencing is collaboration among geographically dispersed participants via real-time video. Video conferencing isn't new. Expensive, room-sized systems have existed for years. What is new is that the current generation of video conferencing technology has downsized these large systems into inexpensive, desktop units.

Why is it becoming so popular?

Video conferencing brings a valuable strategic tool to millions of individuals and small businesses for face-to-face meetings, team collaborations, brainstorming, training, and more, regardless of the proximity of the participants

What types of Video Conferencing exist?

There are two general types of video conferencing: Point-to-Point and Multipoint.

What is "Point-to-Point"?

A Point-to-Point conference is a connection between two video (or data) terminals. For example, a point-to-point video conference may occur by connecting a boardroom in Los Angeles and a conference room in Zurich. Connecting two locations can be arranged simply by having one location dial the other, just as in a regular telephone call. No outside assistance is necessary.

What is "Multipoint"?

A Multipoint conference is a connection among several video (or data) terminals. This type of connection requires the assistance of a bridging service to "bridge" the sites together into one conference. **TelSpan** provides such a service.

What do I need for Video Conferencing?

To organize a video conferencing, you need

1. Equipment,
2. Digital telephone lines (ISDN or IP)
3. A bridging service.

What type of equipment do I need?

There are many options to choose from and, in most cases, you can purchase kits that include all the equipment you will need. Here are a few options:

Desktop Systems - This is the newest and least expensive option. An individual can sit at a desk, hear and see the other participants, and share documents. For a basic desktop system you would need a PC, additional hardware and software, a camera, and a telephone. Desktop systems support both point-to-point conferences as well as multipoint conferences.

Video Phones - This is a simple way to participate. Videophones consist of one unit which includes a camera, a telephone dial-pad, a handset, and a video display. Videophones are compact, easy to use, and inexpensive compared to desktop and room systems. Videophones may be used for point-to-point as well as multipoint conferencing.

Room Systems - If you want to transmit from a large room where many people are gathered together (ex. a conference room), you might consider this option. A room system generally contains high quality video screens, cameras, speakers, and equipment to control the camera angle, focus and zoom. These facilities may be installed on a rolling cart ("Rollabout"). If you decide not to purchase equipment, you can rent a public video conference room with equipment already set up.

Is my equipment compatible?

In the past, video conferencing systems could only communicate with systems produced by the same manufacturer. Since then, the ITU (International Telecommunications Union) has intervened and developed standards to be used by all manufacturers. These standards were named H.320. Anyone using H.320 is expected to communicate with anyone else using H.320 regardless of the equipment vendor.

What are “Protocols” and “Standards”?

A “protocol” is a set of rules for data communication. A “standard” is a set of detailed technical guidelines used to establish uniformity. Protocols and standards create an environment of universal compatibility.

What is “ISDN”?

Because video conferences send a great deal of information back and forth between sites, digital phone lines are required. The preferred type of connection is known as ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network). These digital lines provide unrestricted use of the full bandwidth (as opposed to other digital lines such as Switched 56). ISDN service is now readily available in most countries.

What is “Bandwidth”?

Bandwidth is the capacity of the phone line to carry audio and video signals. The higher the bandwidth, the faster the signals can move and the better the quality of your video conference.

How do I schedule a Video Conference?

Call 1-800-800-1729 or contact us to learn more about **Telspan's** video conferencing services. Let **TelSpan** show you how you can begin video conferencing today!